

Practices that Work #1

Enhancing the Customer Satisfaction Response Rate

CONTRACTING PRACTICES

- 1. Include a penalty clause for failure to achieve the required response rate in the state's contract with customer satisfaction surveyors.**
 - Indiana has found that contracting out brings better results, as contractors can more easily survey customers in the evenings and on weekends.
 - Ohio added a small penalty clause for not achieving the mandated response rate. While this state's contractor has not shown poor performance in the past, the clause was added as a future protective measure.
- 2. Maintain a close, working relationship between the state and the contractor.**
 - Iowa maintains close contact with its contractor. The contractor routinely provides the state with the current response rates and shares any concerns voiced by customers.
 - Idaho monitors and follows up with its contracted surveying staff.
- 3. Provide the contractor with a contact person for each local area.**
 - Each of Ohio's local areas designates a local contact for the contractor. This person may be a case manager, an administrator, an area coordinator, etc. The contractor and local contact are encouraged to communicate about difficulties getting in touch with customers (on the contractor side) or about updating customer contact information as follow-up services are provided (on the local service area side).
 - Idaho establishes a communication loop between the contractor, state and local areas. When the contractor cannot find participants in its monthly sample, they contact state staff, who then contact the local area from which the participant's name came. The local area then contacts the contractor with any updated contact information that may have surfaced.
- 4. Include a pay-for-performance incentive in the contract.**
 - Iowa does this.
- 5. Create a contract that is annually renewable based on performance.**
 - In its first year of performance measurement, Iowa put out an RFP for a one-year contract. This gave the state time to thoroughly understand the process of gathering customer satisfaction responses. However, after the first year, the contract was altered to be renewable on a yearly basis if the contractor continued to return the federally required response rates.
- 6. Create a system in which the contractor has access to specific information about the WIA services a customer received.**
 - The Ohio contractor has access to this information. As a result, during the customer satisfaction survey call, the caller is able to mention the specific services received by the customer. This has been helpful because customers may not always remember that a service they received or an activity they participated in was provided as part of a WIA program.



IN-HOUSE SURVEYING PRACTICES

7. Have local area people contact local customers.

- Kansas purchased American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI) licenses for its five local workforce investment areas (LWIAs) to conduct their own customer satisfaction surveys. Customers responded well to familiar voices that knew how to pronounce their names. The data was aggregated into statewide data as per TEGl 6-00 instructions.

8. Provide customer service training for local program staff.

- Indiana has been conducting customer satisfaction surveying for 15 years within its Employment and Training Department. Local program staff are trained to prepare customers for imminent surveys, including encouraging them to be honest in their feedback, and assuring them of the value of their responses for future customers and services.
- Nebraska provides a variety of trainings on performance measures for field staff, including a half-day training devoted to customer satisfaction surveying. This training includes technical information about using computer and web-based systems as well as techniques for conducting telephone surveys.

9. Recruit local college students to conduct surveys or develop a partnership with a local university or college to conduct surveys as in-kind contribution.

- Missouri's state employees in the planning and research department design the customer satisfaction survey plan. However, they recruit local university students to do the actual surveying during days, evenings and weekends. They are currently also working with a local college that has integrated the call surveys into its customer service course curriculum.

10. Develop a responsive, web-based system for managing customer satisfaction response.

- Nebraska manages its employer survey process by using an internet-based system available only to internal employees. Employers are sorted according to local areas, and the system is programmed to randomly select a certain number of employers every month. When local area staff access the web site, they see if the employers have been selected to be surveyed as well as all contact information for that employer and the three required ACSI questions. The local employee then contacts the employer, reads the script, and fills in the questions. The information is transmitted to the state, and the employer's name is removed from the pool to prevent duplicating contacts.
- Similarly, Nebraska's management information system for participants places participants in a customer satisfaction selection pool when they exit services. Exiters are then selected randomly from this pool for the desired period of time (exiters in a given month or quarter) and are surveyed by state administrative staff. Survey results are entered into the database, and when quarterly and annual performance reports are due the program calculates customer satisfaction rates.

11. Plan to sample a large enough group of customers and employers monthly to ensure reaching the 500 required surveys by the due date of July 1.

- Nebraska calculates monthly samples large enough to ensure the required number of responses by the program year's end.
- Kansas adjusted the size of the initial samples after encountering difficulty getting its local areas to create samples large enough to compensate for missed responses and still come up with the required numbers.

12. Plan ahead to sample enough customers and employers monthly to finish by April or May, leaving the month of June as a safety period for fixing unexpectedly low response rates or other unforeseen problems and still get the report in on time.

SERVICE DELIVERY PRACTICES

- 13. Send a letter to customers (participants and employers) informing them of upcoming telephone surveys.**
 - Nebraska state law requires that a letter be sent to individuals selected for the survey.
 - Idaho sends letters to its sampled employers informing them that they will be contacted for surveying. It stresses the importance of their response.
 - In Ohio, the contractor sends letters to customers informing them that they will be contacted. However, it is the responsibility of the local service areas to prepare the customer to be contacted, including telling them the specific name of the survey contractor that will be calling.
 - Indiana also informs customers by letter before contacting them by phone.
- 14. Encourage participants and employers to report honestly.**
 - Indiana, Nebraska and Ohio specifically encourage their customers to respond to customer service surveys honestly. Case management staff emphasizes that rather than being a cursory activity, customer response to customer service surveys truly affects service improvements.
- 15. Assure customers of the confidentiality of their responses to survey questions.**
- 16. Inform customers at registration and remind them at the time of exit that they will be contacted within 60 days.**
 - Case managers in Idaho review the survey questions with participants during their exit interview to check for customer understanding. Job developers do the same with employer customers.
- 17. Acquire alternative contact information for customers to include additional phone numbers, pagers, cell phone numbers, and e-mail addresses.**
- 18. Update contact information between customer registration and customer exit from services.**
- 19. Avoid soft exits.**
- 20. Offer incentives to customers for responding to customer satisfaction survey.**

Sources:

Nebraska - Vicky Leach 402.471.9883 and Dennis Lacquement 402.471.9856
Kansas - Dave McEachern 785.368.6431
Indiana - Pat Madaras 317.232.8537
Missouri - Roger Bauer 573.751.7897
Iowa - Tony Deach 515.281.9027
Ohio - Jackie Rhoads 614.995.9050
Michigan - John Waller 517.335.5939 wallerj@michigan.gov
Idaho - Seattle Regional Office Denise Fogleman denise_fogleman@doleta.gov